

MUNSON MEMORIAL BUILDING REPORT

Fiscal Year 2004

Munson Memorial Building, located on the South Amherst Common, continues as a center of activity for the Town of Amherst. The handsome white building was built in 1925 with money donated to the Town by Mrs. Parnell Munson. Mrs. Munson wished the building to be named in memory of her husband and stipulated that the library would always be included in the building. This stipulation has always been fulfilled by the Munson Branch of the Jones Library. Munson also serves as the Precinct 8 polling place for the Town. Many groups rent the beautiful upstairs auditorium whose windows look out on an old apple orchard. The elegant wood floors regularly see use by a variety of dancers. A spacious downstairs room, furnished with a large meeting table and bordered by three small offices, is also available for rental and for community meetings. The building is used seven days a week year round and is a wonderful resource for the Town.

Oversight of the maintenance and use of the building is in the hands of three trustees appointed by the Town Manager. The FY 04 trustees are Claudia O'Brien, chair, Betsey Johnson, and John Brongers. Rentals of the building are scheduled by Town employees. Rental fees, including rent paid by the Jones Library, have consistently more than equaled the yearly budget. However, these funds are not set aside for the upkeep of the Munson but rather go into the Town's General Fund.

The Munson is a relatively old building and is always in need of careful attention to maintenance. The last major renovation of Munson dates back to 1989. In the last year the auditorium has been painted, electrical repairs done and new chairs purchased. Two volunteers, Sandra Clark and Chris Hern, have donated their time and expertise to renovation of the walled garden, and Chris Hern has revamped the south garden. The Thursday Club of South Amherst planted a beech tree on the south lawn to commemorate 100 years of club existence.

Achieving completion of long-standing projects has been very difficult for reasons of illness and diminished numbers of available personnel in the Town building supervisor's office. Sidewalks, painting, carpeting, roof work, sewer work, heating systems updates and a shed for a lawnmower are all on hold, although most of these items were funded in the FY 03 capital expenditures budget passed by Town Meeting. The Trustees are pleased with the maintenance that took place this year; they look forward to seeing the remaining needs taken care of during this coming year.

Parking and public safety are of great concern to the Trustees, as the volume and speed of traffic have substantially increased over the years, causing safety hazards for visitors to the Munson. Together with the South Congregational Church Trustees, Munson's next-door neighbor, the Trustees requested assistance from the Town engineers to solve these problems. Several excellent options were presented by the engineers at a meeting with abutters and other townspeople. There will be more open meetings in order to continue to provide opportunities for discussion, input and support from the community. The

Trustees are very grateful for the expert and excellent work done by the Public Works Department. We look forward to solving these safety issues.

Munson is a warm and inviting space. Please come visit this outstanding jewel on the South Amherst common.

Submitted by Claudia O'Brien, Chair, Munson Memorial Building Trustee